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V CORPS ARTILLERY BRIGADE MARRIAGE RETREAT TRAINS 'WHOLE SOLDIER'

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GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany -- Couples in V Corps' 41st Field Artillery Brigade got up close and personal at a recent marriage enrichment retreat at the Edelweiss Lodge and Resort here.



SGT WILFREDO SILVA

1st Sgt. Vincent Sims of V Corps' B Battery, 41st Field Artillery Brigade and his wife, Sabine, renew their wedding vows during the brigade's marriage retreat seminar in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

The retreat focused on training the Soldier as a whole, said Chaplain (Maj.) John Stepp, the 41st's chaplain.

The chain of command fully understands that Soldiers need not only training in military skills, but also training in marriage and spirituality, said Stepp. He explained that this "holistic approach" to training Soldiers has had a significant impact

on their morale. Take care of the whole Soldier and the Army gets a better Soldier, he added.

"I've been in the Army almost 19 years and this is the first time that I've been part of an organization where marriage has received this type of command emphasis," said Master Sgt. Cedric Moore. "A stronger marriage facilitates a stronger Army."

The training, geared towards senior leadership, focused on enriching marriages and providing couples the chance to get away, said Stepp.

"Since senior leaders have different needs than other Soldiers and oftentimes forego their own personal time for that of their Soldiers, we reserved this training especially for them," he said. "Providing these couples an opportunity to get away and concentrate on their relationships without external pressures or interruptions from work was essential in further developing the complete Soldier."

During the retreat, the couples focused on a variety of topics, including the danger signs in a relationship; active listening; the speaker/listener technique; "constructive griping;" overcoming communication filters; relationship expectations; conflict resolution; issues and hidden issues; friendship, fun, sensuality and sexuality; commitment and forgiveness, and relationship ground rules.

After the retreat the couples participated in a ceremony to renew their marriage vows.

"If you think you know it all after 15 years of marriage, you are wrong," said Sgt. 1st Class Vincent Sims, who attended the retreat with his wife. "Sabine and I learned a lot about ourselves and how to work through conflicts. We needed this, and believe that all couples could benefit from this training."

Brigade officials say they plan to host two more marriage retreats and three single-Soldier spiritual adventure retreats this fiscal year.

